

4.3 VISUAL RESOURCES

This section focuses on the project components that may affect the visual character of Carlsbad upon implementation. A brief description of visual resources is provided, followed by a visual impact analysis of the proposed project components.

4.3.1 Existing Conditions

4.3.1.1 Applicable Policies

Below are descriptions of the plans, policies, and regulations related to visual resources that are applicable to implementation of the DMP Update project components (program and project level). These include the City's General Plan Circulation Element (2004), the General Plan Open Space and Conservation Element (1994), and the El Camino Real Scenic Corridor Guidelines (1984).

General Plan Circulation Element

The City's General Plan Circulation Element establishes policies, standards, and guidelines for four categories of scenic corridors and identifies streets to be included within those categories (City of Carlsbad 2004). A main goal of the Circulation Element is to preserve and enhance the visual, environmental, and historic characteristics of the community through sensitive planning of key transportation and utility corridors, consistent with the City's Scenic Corridor Guidelines (City of Carlsbad 1998).

Community Theme Corridor

Community Theme Corridors, which connect Carlsbad with adjacent municipalities and present the city to persons entering and passing through the community, include the following roadways:

- El Camino Real
- Carlsbad Boulevard
- Palomar Airport Road
- La Costa Avenue
- Melrose Drive

Community Scenic Corridor

Community Scenic Corridors, which interconnect major subareas of the present and planned Carlsbad community, include the following roadways:

- College Boulevard
- Cannon Road
- Carlsbad Village Drive
- Faraday Avenue
- I-5
- La Costa Avenue
- Olivenhain Road/Rancho Santa Fe Road
- Poinsettia Lane/Carrillo Way

Natural Open Space and Recreation Corridors

Natural Open Space and Recreation Corridors, which offer spectacular views of waterscapes, landforms, wildlife, and the Pacific Ocean, include the following roadways:

- Adams Street/Park Drive
- Batiquitos Drive
- Jefferson Street (portion adjacent to Buena Vista Lagoon)

Railroad Corridors

Railroad Corridors, which present the city to people passing through by rail, include the following railways:

- Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad

General Plan Open Space and Conservation Element

The City's General Plan includes scenic areas as part of the Open Space for Aesthetic, Cultural, and Educational Purposes designation in the Open Space and Conservation Element (City of Carlsbad 1994). The City considers this type of open space designation as a Category 1 (highest

priority) for future open space planning. The City's goal is to conserve distinctive landscape features and representative areas of natural landscapes.

El Camino Real Corridor Development Standards

The City has established development standards for the El Camino Real Corridor (City of Carlsbad 1984). The development standards outline a general design concept for the corridor within the public right-of-way, including specifications on landscaping, street lighting, street signs, and street furniture (i.e., benches). The standards also include specifications for private property fronting El Camino Real.

4.3.1.2 Program Level

Carlsbad is aesthetically characterized by a mixture of natural and urban environments. The natural environment consists of diverse landforms; rock outcrops; plant and animal resources; and scenic views of the horizon, foothills, lagoons, and the Pacific Ocean. The natural scenic landscape includes rugged coastal bluffs, three expansive low-lying coastal lagoons, and numerous valleys and small canyons surrounded by rolling foothills.

The urban environment is composed of residential, commercial, and industrial uses and includes historic buildings, landscaping, signage/monuments, and public works of art. The city is not dominated by one overarching architectural theme; however, there is a concentration of older Victorian-style structures in the northwestern portion of the city and many Spanish and Western Ranch-style buildings in the southeastern portion. The industrial portion of the city includes large industrial parks along the foothills near Palomar Airport Road, with a variety of glass and concrete office, manufacturing, and warehouse buildings. The Encina Power Plant, located on the coast just south of Agua Hedionda Lagoon, dominates the surrounding coastal viewshed.

Carlsbad is characterized by diverse topography and consists of inland hills and coastal bluffs adjacent to the Pacific Ocean. Inland valley, hill, and ridge formations range in elevation from sea level to 1,000 feet above mean sea level. Along the coast, there are low sandy beaches and high coastal bluffs. From the coast to I-5, the land is relatively level, sloping upward to the east. East of I-5, the topography includes steeper sloping hills. The broad floodplains of the three lagoons located within the city boundaries (Buena Vista, Agua Hedionda, and Batiquitos) extend inland between hills bounding them on either side.

Throughout the city, existing storm water drainage facilities are part of the urban environment. Visible facilities consist of infrastructure such as pipelines (e.g., RCP), natural drainage channels, concrete trapezoidal channels, drainage inlets and outlets, gabion structures, and sediment basins. The locations of existing facilities are often adjacent to developed areas in the city.

4.3.1.3 Project Level

Agua Hedionda and Calavera creeks flow through Rancho Carlsbad, an existing residential community. Portions of the creeks are visible by the residents of Rancho Carlsbad, especially from homes located adjacent to the creeks. The segments of the creeks within the project area are primarily vegetated with invasive exotic and ornamental plants. Figure 4.3-1 is a photograph of Agua Hedionda Creek, and Figure 4.3-2 shows Calavera Creek. Figure 4.3-3 shows the confluence of the two creeks. The confluence of the creeks is clearly visible to drivers traveling west on El Camino Real.



Figure 4.3-1. Agua Hedionda Creek



Figure 4.3-2. Eroded concrete lining in Calavera Creek



Figure 4.3-3. Agua Hedionda Creek, looking north at the confluence with Calavera Creek

The banks of Agua Hedionda Creek between the Cannon Road and El Camino Real bridges are vegetated with riparian species, such as willows, visible from the adjacent roadways and the residences southwest of the creek. Figures 4.3-4 and 4.3-5 depict views of the Agua Hedionda Creek between the two bridges. Portions of the bottom channel of Agua Hedionda Creek, between the Cannon Road and El Camino Real bridges, is visible to drivers traveling east on El Camino Real and north on Cannon Road; however, the mature trees and vegetation provide some screening.

4.3.2 Significance Criteria

The DMP Update would result in potentially significant visual impacts if it would:

- substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or
- create a new source of substantial light and glare, which would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area.

4.3.3 Impact Analysis

4.3.3.1 Program Level

Drainage features are a visible part of the existing urban landscape in Carlsbad and are often located within or adjacent to developed areas. Proposed DMP Update components would primarily involve construction of new facilities or replacement and improvements to existing facilities within existing drainages. Many of the proposed projects would be located at or below grade within or adjacent to the existing road right-of-way or in developed/disturbed areas (refer to Tables 4.1-2 and 4.1-3 in Section 4.1 [Land Use]). The proposed locations of DMP Update facilities are such that views from designated scenic corridors or scenic vistas are not anticipated to be obstructed or degraded. Additionally, the design features identified in Table 3-6 require all design plans to be consistent with scenic corridor design standards, where applicable. Proposed bridge structures (PLDA components C1 and D2) would involve modifications or replacement of existing bridge structures located within existing roadways and developed areas. Although potential staging areas and access roads would be visible during construction activities for some project components (PLDA components AFA, AFB, BQ, C, and DH), this would be a temporary impact to the existing visual character of the area and would be relandscaped to preconstruction



Figure 4.3-4. Agua Hedionda Creek, looking west towards Cannon Road Bridge



Figure 4.3-5. Agua Hedionda Creek, looking northeast towards El Camino Real Bridge

conditions after project completion (see Table 3-6). Proposed drainage facilities within existing open space areas (refer to Tables 4.1-2 and 4.1-3) would be primarily located in natural channels or would involve below-grade drainage features. Overall, potential impacts to scenic vistas or the existing usual character of the city would be less than significant.

Construction of proposed DMP Update components and potential future components would primarily occur during daylight hours; however, components proposed within rights-of-way may involve construction during nighttime hours to minimize traffic-related impacts. Nighttime construction lighting of facilities would be shielded or directed away from adjacent residences, in accordance with the construction measures identified in Table 3-6. The proposed components would not require permanent lighting features or utilize reflective materials that could create glare. Therefore, no new sources of light or glare would be created as a result of the proposed DMP Update components. Potential impacts would be less than significant.

4.3.3.2 Operation and Maintenance

Proposed operation and maintenance activities would occur periodically at existing facilities. No new facilities would be constructed as part of proposed operation and maintenance activities. Operation and maintenance activities would be periodic and temporary and would be restricted to existing facilities and maintenance of the drainage purposes of those facilities. If construction were required during maintenance of a specific facility, visual impacts from construction activity would be periodic and temporary. Staging areas and equipment storage would be located in existing right-of-way or other disturbed/developed areas to minimize short-term visual impacts. Potential impacts to visual resources from operation and maintenance activities would be less than significant.

4.3.3.3 Project Level

PLDA Project Components

The proposed dredging and improvements in Agua Hedionda and Calavera creeks (i.e., PLDA components B and BN) would be located adjacent to El Camino Real and Cannon Road. As discussed above, El Camino Real is a designated Community Theme Corridor and Cannon Road is identified as a Community Scenic Corridor in the Carlsbad General Plan. Although the proposed staging area south of El Camino Real would be visible during dredging and construction activities (Figure 3-5), this would be a temporary impact to the existing visual character of the area and would not be considered significant. The staging area along Cannon

Road would be located behind an existing retaining wall and would not be visible to motorists. The existing ornamental wall south of the proposed staging area would block views of construction staging for Rancho Carlsbad residents.

The channel bottoms of Agua Hedionda Creek and Calavera Creek would be lowered and widened. The visual impacts of this work would be minimal to motorists traveling on El Camino Real and Cannon Road and are not anticipated to affect the scenic qualities of the corridors. The existing bridge piers under El Camino Real would potentially be encased in concrete to create a continuous pier; however, the piers are not visible to motorists from El Camino Real or Cannon Road and are not readily visible to Rancho Carlsbad residents.

Removal of vegetation within and along Agua Hedionda and Calavera creeks would be required to allow for dredging activities. Vegetation removal may reduce screening along the roadway; however, some mature trees would be retained along the banks to maintain adequate screening. Vegetation removal would not conflict overall with the City's Scenic Corridor Guidelines, which require "visually pleasing intersections at points where scenic corridors cross" (City of Carlsbad 1998). Some areas where ornamental nonnative vegetation would be removed during dredging and construction would be relandscaped with native vegetation, consistent with applicable policies for scenic corridor design standards, as identified in Table 3-6. Following construction, the improvements to Agua Hedionda and Calavera creeks are anticipated to provide an overall visual enhancement of the creeks by removing eroded slopes and concrete and replacing with Vmax, which would be revegetated. Therefore, potential impacts from PLDA components B and BN to views from scenic corridors and Rancho Carlsbad residents would be less than significant.

Proposed dredging and improvements would only occur during daylight hours and would not require any temporary nighttime lighting of facilities. In addition, the proposed improvements to the creeks would not require permanent lighting or utilize reflective materials. Therefore, no new sources of light or glare would be created as a result of the proposed PLDA projects B and BN.

Non-PLDA Project Components

Non-PLDA components B and BN involve long-term channel maintenance in Agua Hedionda and Calavera creeks, respectively, and would require periodic inspections; sediment, debris, and vegetation removal; and repair of eroded surfaces associated with drainage and bridge appurtenances. Long-term channel maintenance would occur periodically in existing channels to restore and maintain existing conditions of the channels. Long-term channel maintenance would

not affect any existing scenic resources (views, vistas, or corridors). If construction during maintenance is required within the channels to repair slopes or bridge features, visual impacts from construction activity would be periodic and temporary. Staging areas and equipment storage would be located in existing right-of-way or other disturbed/developed areas to minimize short-term visual impacts. Potential impacts to visual resources would be less than significant.

Proposed long-term maintenance activities in the creeks would only occur during daylight hours and would not require any temporary nighttime lighting of facilities. In addition, the proposed improvements to the creeks would not require permanent lighting or utilize reflective materials. Therefore, no new sources of light or glare would be created as a result of the proposed non-PLDA projects.

4.3.4 Significance of Impacts

4.3.4.1 Program Level

No direct or indirect short-term or long-term potentially significant impacts to visual resources are anticipated as a result of proposed program level DMP Update components.

4.3.4.2 Operation and Maintenance

No direct or indirect short-term or long-term potentially significant impacts to visual resources are anticipated as a result of proposed operation and maintenance activities.

4.3.4.3 Project Level

No direct or indirect short-term or long-term potentially significant impacts to visual resources are anticipated as a result of proposed project level DMP Update components.

4.3.5 Mitigation Measures

4.3.5.1 Program Level

No potentially significant impacts to visual resources are anticipated as a result of proposed program level DMP Update components; therefore, no mitigation would be required.

4.3.5.2 Operation and Maintenance

No potentially significant impacts to visual resources are anticipated as a result of proposed operation and maintenance activities; therefore, no mitigation would be required.

4.3.5.3 Project Level

No potentially significant impacts to visual resources are anticipated as a result of proposed project level DMP Update components; therefore, no mitigation would be required.

This page intentionally left blank.